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ANNEX II

THE EFFECTS OF SOVIET AND CHINESE INVOLVEMENT  
IN THE WAR ON THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS

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## ANNEX II

### THE EFFECTS OF SOVIET AND CHINESE INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR ON THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS

#### I. Introduction

There is substantial evidence that the political positions of the Soviet Union and Communist China on the war, and the amount of their material assistance to the war effort, are highly significant influences on Vietnamese Communist policy. The importance of Soviet and Chinese support and assistance has been readily admitted by the Vietnamese. In his April 1965 speech setting forth the situation and tasks facing the Vietnamese after the US began bombing the North, Premier Pham Van Dong said simply that the "more" the Vietnamese are "supported and assisted in all fields by the socialist camp, the more they will be able to struggle vigorously and resolutely" against the enemy in Vietnam. In April of 1966, Dong re-emphasized the significance of bloc backing in a declaration that the "victories" of the Vietnamese people are not only the results of their own efforts, but are also the "result of the infinitely valuable sympathy, support and assistance by the fraternal socialist countries."

The Vietnamese view bloc support as valuable in sustaining and, in some ways, increasing the military pressure the Communists can bring to bear in South Vietnam. They also see it as a protective umbrella which partially inhibits direct allied military pressure on the DRV and helps to negate the effects of the bombing of the North. Firm Soviet and Chinese backing also helps complete the ideological equation in the conflict so important to the Communists, i. e., this is a "war of liberation" and it is the duty of all Communists to support and encourage such wars.

#### II. The Significance of Economic and Military Aid

##### A. General Level of Aid

In an apparent response to the allied air offensive, military and economic assistance provided by the

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USSR and Communist China increased sharply in 1965. Although the total amounts of aid extended during 1965 are not known, reasonably firm evidence enables us to estimate that military aid amounting to about \$250 million and economic aid of about \$100 million was probably delivered in 1965. The Communist allies have undoubtedly undertaken commitments to provide additional assistance but we are unable to make any meaningful estimates of the total value of these commitments. There is reliable evidence that the USSR in 1965 did commit itself to extend additional assistance of at least \$160 million. We do not know if this extension is for military or economic programs. The weight of available evidence suggests that it is not for weapons but is probably intended as assistance in the rebuilding of bomb damaged facilities or for defense related activities.

The immediate significance of the military and economic aid provided by other Communist countries is that it provides North Vietnam the material means to carry out its aggressive programs. North Vietnam is significant militarily as a logistic base for the transmission of military supplies to South Vietnam, as a source of manpower, and as the center for control of the insurgency. As a primitive economy it has a capability to produce only minor items of military equipment and relies on other Communist countries for all of its heavy military equipment and most of its small arms and ammunition. Material assistance to North Vietnam is also significant as an apparent commitment of other Communist countries to underwrite the material costs of the war and to assist in the reconstruction of North Vietnam's economy. These assurances undoubtedly underlie North Vietnam's apparent willingness to lose its economic facilities to air attack and to persist in its pursuit of the war in South Vietnam. This attitude is undoubtedly strengthened by the knowledge that even more assistance will be forthcoming in 1966. Preliminary data on shipping to North Vietnam show that imports continue to rise above 1965 levels. At the same time exports are continuing to decline so that the growing import surplus can only be financed by additional assistance from Communist countries.

#### B. Economic Aid

Known economic credits and grants extended by Communist countries through 1962 amounted to more than \$956

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million. (See Table II-1). About 40 percent of the total was in the form of grants. By the end of 1964 from \$550-800 million or 60-80 percent of the extension had been drawn. The USSR accounted for \$370 million (40 percent) of total extensions and Communist China provided \$457 million (48 percent). The remaining \$130 million was supplied by the European Communist countries and token amounts were provided by Albania, North Korea, and Mongolia.

After an apparent hiatus of two years the Soviet program for economic assistance to North Vietnam was revived in February 1965 when Premier Kosygin visited Hanoi. As the war expanded substantial new extensions of economic aid were made in mid-1965. The only public statements about the value and composition of the aid has come from Hungary which is reported to have granted a modest \$5.5 million for trucks, telecommunications equipment, medical supplies, and machine tools. Rumania is also reported [REDACTED] to have extended a credit of \$4.4 million.

In December 1965 and January 1966 new aid agreements were signed with all Communist countries, suggesting that the mid-1965 agreements were small. Since then other Communist countries have promised increased assistance for North Vietnam. In May 1966, Moscow reported an agreement to provide technical assistance; additional Chinese aid for agriculture was announced in July. All the Warsaw Pact members also pledged increased economic aid to North Vietnam in July 1966.

We estimate that deliveries of economic aid in 1965 were in the order of \$100 million or from 20-40 percent above the average annual level in 1955-1964. In the last nine months, however, an unusually large number of new Soviet industrial aid contracts with North Vietnam were noticed [REDACTED]. In June 1966 Soviet specialists were reported in North Vietnam to determine equipment needs for constructing new enterprises and rebuilding those destroyed by US air attacks.

All of these developments foreshadow a substantially increased aid in 1966 and 1967, a trend already confirmed by our intelligence on the volume and composition of North Vietnamese imports.

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Table II - 1  
Communist Economic Aid Extended to North Vietnam a/  
1955-64

	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963-64	1955-64
Communist China	200	b/	b/	b/	100	b/	157	b/	b/	457
USSR	100	8	12	21	25	200	4	N.A.	b/	369
Eastern Europe	50	8	7	b/	2	Negl.	62	b/	b/	130
Total	350	16	19	21	128	200	223	N.A.	b/	956

a. This is the minimum of economic aid extended by the Soviet Bloc and Communist China. In addition, insignificant amounts of aid have been extended by Albania, Mongolia, and North Korea. Because of rounding, components may not add to the totals shown.

b. No extensions are known to exist, although some may have taken place.

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C. Military Aid

Military aid to North Vietnam which had previously been on a relatively small scale reached [REDACTED] in 1965.\* About three-fourths of this aid, by value, was provided by the USSR as the supplier of North Vietnam's modern air defenses, particularly its SAM system and jet interceptors. The approximately [REDACTED] provided by Communist China was limited principally to conventional arms.

1. Soviet Military Aid

By the end of 1965 Soviet military aid to North Vietnam approached \$450 million. The sequence and value of Soviet arms aid to North Vietnam was as follows (in million US \$):\*\*

1953-63	222
1964	[REDACTED]
1965	[REDACTED]
Total	[REDACTED]

Military aid extended after August 1964 and in early 1965 probably was completely delivered by the end of 1965. Major deliveries included equipment for [REDACTED] surface-to-air missile firing battalions, [REDACTED] IL-28 light jet bombers, [REDACTED] MIG-21 jet fighters, [REDACTED] MIG-15/16 jet fighters, [REDACTED] AA guns ranging from 37-100 mm., and hundreds of vehicles. (See Table II-2).

The USSR has also provided military technicians to instruct the North Vietnamese in the operation of the SAM system. In addition the North Vietnamese have received pilot training in Soviet jet fighters both in North Vietnam and the USSR. We estimate that the number of military technicians may have been as high as 1,500 in mid-1965, but diminished when the North Vietnamese began to

\*The value of military aid is expressed in Soviet foreign trade prices.

\*\*Values, reported in rubles, have been converted to dollars at the official exchange rate: 1 ruble = US \$1.11.

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Table II-2  
Estimated Soviet and Chinese Deliveries of Military Equipment to North Vietnam  
1953 - June 1966

Equipment	USSR		Communist China		Total	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
SAM Firing Battalion	<u>24</u>	<u>127.0</u>	-	-	<u>24</u>	<u>127.0</u>
Aircraft	<u>163</u>	<u>55.4</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>5.7</u>	<u>207</u>	<u>61.1</u>
IL-28 light jet bomber	8	2.8	-	-	-	-
MIG-21 jet fighter	25	20.0	-	-	-	-
MIG-15/17 jet fighter	35	4.5	44	5.7	-	-
MI-6 helicopter	6	12.0	-	-	-	-
Other	89	16.1	-	-	-	-
Naval Craft	<u>20</u>	<u>8.2</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>21.6</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>29.8</u>
SO-1 subchaser	4	4.0	-	-	-	-
P-4 motor torpedo boat	12	3.0	-	-	-	-
Small minesweeper	4	1.2	-	-	-	-
Swatow-class PGM	-	-	30	18.0	-	-
Shanghai-class PTF	-	-	4	3.6	-	-
Artillery (mostly AA guns)	<u>2,800</u>	<u>68.0</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>3,000</u>	<u>72.3</u>
Armor (tanks, A.P.C.'s, S.P. guns)	<u>150</u>	<u>5.4</u>	-	-	<u>150</u>	<u>5.4</u>
Radar	<u>49</u>	<u>5.0</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>7.5</u>	<u>174</u>	<u>12.5</u>
Trucks and Vehicles	<u>1,500</u>	<u>7.5</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>7.5</u>	<u>3,000</u>	<u>15.0</u>
Small Arms and Infantry Weapons	Large Quantities	<u>50.0</u>	Large Quantities	<u>50.0</u>	Large Quantities	<u>100.0</u>
Ammunition	Large Quantities	<u>50.0</u>	Large Quantities	<u>30.0</u>	Large Quantities	<u>80.0</u>
Total		<u>376.5</u>		<u>126.6</u>		<u>503.1</u>

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assume operational control of the SAM system. The cost of this technical assistance was probably less than \$10 million.

Following North Vietnam's active confrontation with the US in the Tonkin Gulf incidents of August 1964, the Soviets extended Hanoi the reported [REDACTED] grant listed above for antiaircraft and including [REDACTED] for surface-to-air missile systems and missile and flight training for North Vietnamese crews. Shortly after Kosygin's visit to Hanoi in February 1965, another [REDACTED] was reportedly granted for aircraft and additional antiaircraft and SAM equipment.

An indication of continued military aid in 1966 is contained in reports on the "Gratuitous Aid and Technical Assistance Agreement" signed in Moscow in December 1965. Reportedly, the USSR agreed to provide large quantities of 130-mm antiaircraft guns, other ground equipment, and possibly [REDACTED] additional MIG-21 jet fighters. Although not enough is known on types and quantities of equipment to permit an estimate of the value of the arms portion of the agreement, the cost of the antiaircraft guns and jet fighters alone will exceed \$80 million.

## 2. Chinese Military Aid

There is little information on Chinese military aid to North Vietnam, but we estimate that total aid by the end of 1965 was on the order of \$125 million of which [REDACTED] was delivered in 1965. Although the North Vietnamese armed forces are structured basically on Chinese rather than Soviet lines, until 1960-61 they were equipped largely with weapons from the USSR. From 1960 to the Gulf of Tonkin incidents in August 1964 Chinese arms aid to Hanoi probably increased to a point where it equalled--if it did not exceed--Soviet arms aid. Following the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, the Chinese continued to provide some weapons, including [REDACTED] MIG-15/17 jet fighters and [REDACTED] Shanghai-class fast patrol boats, but fell far behind the USSR as the major arms supplier. The major Chinese contribution to Hanoi's war effort has been as a provider of military construction units and materials and, possibly, operational antiaircraft elements.

Some elements of Chinese military units are positioned in Northeast and Northwest near the main railroad

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lines leading to Yunnan and Kwangsi. Elements of two railway engineer divisions of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and an antiaircraft division are known to be in these areas. Although little is known regarding the size of this force, it is estimated that from 25,000 to 45,000 Chinese may be involved.

Aside from these operational units, Chinese military technicians in North Vietnam may exceed 1,000. Unconfirmed reports state that 200 North Vietnamese pilots and ground crews trained in China in 1961-64. Although little is known on the numbers of Chinese technicians advising North Vietnam in the period 1961-64, they are believed not to have been so large as to move the cost of this military technical assistance above the \$10 million spent by the USSR.

### 3. Other Communist Military Aid

Military aid supplied to North Vietnam by the Communist countries of Eastern Europe before 1965 was negligible. The major items of military and emergency reconstruction aid extended or delivered by these countries since then may be summarized as follows:

<u>Donor Country</u>	<u>Nature of Aid</u>
Czechoslovakia	Small Arms, Ammunition
East Germany	10 Field Hospitals
Hungary	Medicines, Hospital
Poland	Barges, Trucks, Hospital
Rumania	Vehicles, Trucks

East European aid primarily is of a quasimilitary, defense support nature (even the Czechoslovakian small arms were mainly sporting rifles for training purposes). This aid has gained impetus in 1966 and may be expected to increase substantially in the future.

### D. Bloc Aid as a Critical Factor in Continuing the War

Although Soviet and Chinese military and economic aid has been small in terms of their capabilities, it is absolutely vital to North Vietnam's ability to adequately

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defend its territory and to support the insurgency in South Vietnam. A cessation of bloc military aid would, in fact, almost certainly make it impossible for the Vietnamese to sustain the war in South Vietnam at its present level of intensity.

North Vietnam has no productive capability to produce heavy military equipment or the new family of weapons with which the VC Main Forces are being equipped. The NVA and VC Main Forces are totally dependent on outside sources for the 7.62 family of weapons and the heavier weapons being introduced into South Vietnam. If these sources were denied, the VC/NVA forces would be deprived of their major offensive capabilities, and once stock-piles were exhausted these forces would be compelled to revert to a much lower level of military activity.

Since the available evidence points not only to a continuation, but to a probable increase in bloc aid during the last half of 1966, it does not appear likely that the Vietnamese Communists will be faced with devising any substitutes for it or of altering their policy to take account of its cessation during the foreseeable future. Moreover, so long as Soviet and Chinese support continues at least at its present levels, it does not appear that the Vietnamese Communists would view it as a critical factor in any basic determination they might make on whether to continue the fighting. Vietnamese Communist assertions that, in the final analysis, they must rely mainly on their own resources to prosecute the revolution appear to reflect a genuine and deeply held belief. The theme of "self-reliance" has been a persistent one in Vietnamese Communist statements, and has not at all been abandoned or dampened down in the face of the increasing allied military pressure on the Viet Cong and on the DRV.

In March of 1966, for example, DRV party spokesman Truong Chinh declared that the "strategic line" of the revolution was still to rely "mainly on our own forces" while fighting a protracted war. In April, Ho Chi Minh told a Cairo newsman that the Vietnamese people, while "highly appreciating" the assistance of the socialist countries would "basically depend on their own forces." In May, another North Vietnamese politburo spokesman, Pham Hung, reiterated that, even while employing assistance from the bloc, "our dictum is to rely principally on our own strength."

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### III. The Rationale For Chinese Support

There appear to be several important considerations in the Vietnamese view which tend to reinforce their "do it yourself" attitude. They apparently believe, for one thing, that there are distinct limits to the amount of political and materiel support which can be counted upon from Peking and Moscow. Vietnamese documents and statements indicate that they believe Peking is willing to make a considerable contribution of military, economic, and political assistance to keep the fighting going along its present lines--a protracted struggle by proxy, fought if necessary to the last Vietnamese. Hanoi is also well aware that the conflict provides a test case of Mao's theory that "wars of liberation" can be fought without provoking a US nuclear response against either the local Communists or their sponsors. This war, moreover, is taking place in an area close to China and in a region which the Chinese believe to be their rightful sphere of influence.

However, the Vietnamese also appear to believe that there are limits to the price Peking is willing to pay to keep the conflict going. This is implicit, in part, in the DRV's handling and comment on public Chinese pledges of assistance. For example, a 28 December 1965 editorial in the DRV party daily, which dealt with Chinese assistance, was formulated in a manner which made it clear that the latest pledges of Chinese support were not as strong as those earlier issued by Peking, prior to the escalation of the air war against North Vietnam. The editorial also treated the question of Chinese volunteers for Vietnam in a fashion which suggested some doubt in Hanoi over the ultimate willingness of Peking to bring in combat troops should the situation deteriorate to the point where they might be needed. The editorial followed a new aid pact between the Chinese and the North Vietnamese signed in early December. The pact was treated in the press of both countries with caution and without the usual fanfare. The aid, moreover, was in the form of a loan and not a grant. This, in itself, suggested limitations on the Chinese interest in supporting the Vietnamese.

Peking's caution is not, however, entirely a negative factor in Hanoi's view. The Vietnamese themselves wish to prevent the introduction of such massive Chinese assistance as would undercut Vietnamese Communist control

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and direction of the insurgency, unless it was required to prevent the extinction of the Communist regime in the DRV. This was underscored by DRV politburo member, Le Duc Tho, in an article published in the North Vietnamese party journal in February 1966. The "lines, strategy, and methods" of the revolution, wrote Tho, are a "responsibility which our party must assume, as we ourselves and alone can realize most clearly the problems concerning the revolution in our country."

Tho was doubtless addressing both Peking and Moscow in his remarks, but he probably had mainly in mind the persistent Chinese political pressure on Hanoi designed to keep the Vietnamese steadfast in the war and block any possible move toward negotiations. One prime example of this occurred in June when the Chinese lashed out at a Soviet-sponsored World Peace Council proposal on negotiations to end the war. Although the proposal closely echoed the DRV's own four points, the Chinese maintained that because it did not insist on the "immediate and total withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam," it had left out the key element in a Vietnam settlement. Hanoi itself has never insisted on immediate withdrawal as a condition for negotiations and did not make any comment on the proposal by the council. Peking, however, was clearly anxious to make it appear that the Asian Communist position on ending the war was tougher than indicated in the Council proposal to which the North Vietnamese had been a party. Peking's quick attack denied Hanoi the opportunity to voice any approval of the proposal lest it indicate an open difference of opinion with the Chinese.

Even given the Chinese willingness to pressure Hanoi, however, it is probable that the pressure would not be sufficient to force the Vietnamese to stay in the war if they decide on their own volition to end the fighting. The Vietnamese Communists probably estimate that, in view of the limitations on the Chinese commitment, Peking would do little more than complain if the conflict were terminated short of an insurgent victory. The Chinese, in fact, seem to recognize this, for they have repeatedly left themselves an out by emphasizing that all decisions on the war are "strictly" up to the Vietnamese.

#### IV. Vietnamese View of Soviet Support

The Vietnamese Communists probably judge, on the basis of Moscow's assistance so far, that the Soviet commitment

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in the war is considerably more restrained than that of the Chinese. This can be seen, in part, in North Vietnamese statements dealing with Soviet assistance. Although Hanoi has, in the main, carefully attempted to express equal gratitude for the help of both bloc powers, some remarks implicitly critical of Moscow have occasionally come forth. In mid-1965, for example, at a time when the North Vietnamese signed aid pacts with both Peking and Moscow, DRV spokesmen were much warmer in their description of Chinese assistance than of Soviet. Peking's support was termed at the time the "firmest, the most powerful, and the most effective," while China was hailed as the "most enthusiastic and resolute comrade in arms of all nations fighting against the imperialists."

Hanoi is fully aware that Moscow, like Peking, has also displayed an overriding concern in its actions on the war to avoid steps which might lead to a direct Soviet-US military confrontation. For example, Moscow has throughout the conflict avoided sea delivery to Haiphong of sensitive military shipments. Moreover, important Soviet officials have gone out of their way in private to disavow the significance for Soviet-US relations of the presence of Soviet military-technical personnel in the DRV.

It is doubtless clear to the Vietnamese that the Soviets would like an early end to the war. Evidence suggests that the Soviets did cautiously advise Hanoi to move toward a political settlement of the conflict in early 1965. Following Kosygin's visit to the DRV in February, the Chinese charged that Moscow had sent a formal proposal to Hanoi and Peking suggesting a reconvention of an international conference on Indochina. During the bombing pause early this year, party secretary Shelepin apparently took further soundings on Hanoi's attitude toward possible political alternatives to the conflict. In recent months, in view of the continuing hard-line stand of the Vietnamese, the Russians appear to have avoided applying most of the pressures they could exert on the DRV, probably judging them to be marginal at best. Soviet party chief Brezhnev displayed this cautious attitude during recent talks with De Gaulle. He told the French president that Moscow would be ready to attend a conference only "if and when Hanoi agrees."

Despite the limitations on Soviet assistance and support, it is probable that Soviet backing has, on balance, the effect of buttressing the Vietnamese Communist will to

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persist in the conflict. The Vietnamese probably judge that they can continue to count indefinitely on Moscow's assistance along present lines so long as the war continues in its present context. They probably believe, in fact, that the Soviets are now locked into the struggle in view of the pretensions Moscow still holds to leadership of the Communist camp, and that it cannot afford to step completely aside.

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